

Message Text

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TAGS: ELAB, NL

SUBJECT: NVV DECISION TO REJECT SER DISCUSSION NOTE RETARDS
DUTCH TRADE UNION UNITY

1. SUMMARY: THE NATIONAL FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (NVV) HAS DECIDED NOT TO PARTICIPATE IN THE SOCIAL-ECONOMIC COUNCIL'S (SER) DISCUSSION OF SER RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE GOVT OF 1974 WAGE AND PRICE POLICY. THE NVV EXECUTIVE COUNCIL TOOK THIS DECISION, WHICH REVERSES THE NVV EXECUTIVE BOARD'S ACCEPTANCE OF THE SER MEMORANDUM, WITHOUT CONSULTING EITHER THE CATHOLIC (NVK) OR PROTESTANT (CNV) TRADE UNION FEDERATIONS. DESPITE NVV DENIALS, IT IS PROBABLE THAT INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE NVV BOARD AND THE LARGEST NVV AFFILIATE, THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS UNION, LED TO THIS LATEST DEVELOPMENT, WHICH MUST BE VIEWED AS ANOTHER SET-BACK FOR THE CAUSE OF TRADE UNION UNITY IN THE NETHERLANDS.
END SUMMARY.

2. ON JULY 24, THE DUTCH FEDERATION OF TRADE UNIONS (NVV) ANNOUNCED IT COULD NOT ACCEPT THE SER'S DRAFT RECOMMENDATION TO THE GOVT ON 1974 WAGE AND PRICE POLICY. THEREFORE, THE NVV WILL NOT PARTICIPATE IN THE SER DISCUSSIONS OF THE DRAFT SCHEDULED TO
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BEGIN WEEK OF JULY 29. THE NVV EXPLAINED ITS AFFILIATED UNIONS

FELT THE SER'S STATEMENT ON EFFECTS OF INCOME LEVELING AND REDISTRIBUTION WAGE POLICY SHOULD NOT BE ISSUED WHILE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT ITSELF STILL DISCUSSING THESE QUESTIONS.

3. PROF. D.B. SCHOUTEN OF TILBURG UNIVERSITY, WHO DRAFTED SER STATEMENT, COMMENTED THAT ALL OF THE "SHARP EDGES" HAD BEEN TAKEN OFF OF HIS ORIGINAL RECOMMENDATION BECAUSE OF TRADE UNION OPPOSITION. SCHOUTEN NOTED THAT SER DOCUMENT, IN ITS ORIGINAL FORM, RECOMMENDED AGAINST DUTCH WAGE POLICY BEING GEARED TO DEVELOPMENTS ABROAD. IT ALSO SUGGESTED EFFORTS TO LEVEL OR REDISTRIBUTE INCOMES COULD HAVE ADVERSE EFFECTS ON THE TOTAL DUTCH ECONOMY. SCHOUTON, WHO ADMITTED UNIONS' OPPOSITION HAD RESULTED IN RECOMMENDATION BEING AS VAGUE AS POSSIBLE, WONDERED ABOUT UNITY OF DOCUMENT WHICH ONLY DISCUSSED LABOR DEMANDS WITHOUT POINTING OUT THEIR CONSEQUENCES.

4. BOTH THE NKV AND THE CNV WILL PARTICIPATE IN THE SER DISCUSSIONS OF THE 1974 WAGE AND PRICE RECOMMENDATION. NKV ACTING PRESIDENT SPIT REGRETTED THE NVV'S FAILURE TO CONSULT ITS TRADE UNION PARTNERS AND SUGGESTED AN EMERGENCY MEETING TO ATTEMPT TO FORMULATE A COMMON POSITION, BUT NVV IGNORED THIS SUGGESTION. CNV TOOK SIMILAR LINE AND WAS ALSO IGNORED. BOTH NKV AND CNV ATTRIBUTED NVV DECISION TO PROBLEMS BETWEEN NVV EXECUTIVE BOARD AND INDUSTRIAL WORKERS' UNION, NVV'S LARGEST AFFILIATE WHOSE PRESIDENT IS ARI GROENEVELT. BOTH THE CONFESSONAL UNIONS NOTED THAT THE NVV DELEGATES IN THE SER, INCLUDING WIM KOK, WHO IS SCHEDULED TO TAKE OVER AS PRESIDENT OF THE NVV IN MID-SEPT, HAD ACCEPTED THE REVISED SER REPORT AS A USEFUL BASIS FOR FURTHER DISCUSSIONS.

5. REPRESENTATIVES OF BOTH THE NVV EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS' UNION QUICKLY DENIED THAT INTERNAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE NVV EXPLAIN THE REJECTION OF THE SER RECOMMENDATIONS. THIS LATEST DECISION, HOWEVER, COMES ONLY A FEW DAYS AFTER NVV REJECTED PROPOSALS FROM ITS 150,000 MEMBER YOUTH GROUP WHICH AIMED AT RESTRUCTURING YOUTH GROUP SO IT COULD FUNCTION MORE EFFECTIVELY AND INDEPENDENTLY. THE YOUTH GROUP'S REORGANIZATION PLAN HAD BEEN APPROVED BY THE NVV EXECUTIVE BOARD, BUT AFTER OBJECTIONS FROM THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS' UNION, THE NVV EXECUTIVE COUNCIL REVERSED THE BOARD'S DECISION. MEETING IN UNCLASSIFIED

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SPECIAL SESSION, UNANIMOUSLY AGREED TO RE-OPEN DISCUSSIONS ON THE YOUTH GROUP'S PROPOSAL. ACTING NVV PRESIDENT DE BOON ADMITTED THERE HAD BEEN INSUFFICIENT DISCUSSION IN THE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL AND THE DECISION TO REJECT THE REORGANIZATION PROPOSAL HAD NOT BEEN "DEMOCRATIC." AT THAT TIME, DE BOON TOO FELT OBLIGED TO DENY REPORTS OF DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE NVV BOARD AND THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS.

6. COMMENT: DESPITE NVV DISAVOWALS, IT SEEMS CLEAR THAT CONFLICTS BETWEEN THE NVV INDUSTRIAL WORKERS' UNION AND THE NVV EXECUTIVE BOARD HAVE WEAKENED THE EXECUTIVE BOARD'S CONTROL OVER THE NVV. BEGINNING WITH TER HEIDE'S UNEXPECTED RESIGNATION AS NVV CHAIRMAN IN FALL OF 72, THROUGH THE PERIOD OF LABOR INSTABILITY EARLIER THIS YEAR TO THIS LATEST MANIFESTATION OF DISAGREEMENT BETWEEN NVV EXECUTIVE BOARD AND THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS, THERE IS EVIDENT A CONSCIOUS AND CONTINUING EFFORT BY INDUSTRIAL WORKERS' UNION PRESIDENT GROENEVELT TO INCREASE THE AUTONOMY OF HIS UNION AND TO DOWNGRADE THE ROLE OF NVV EXECUTIVE BOARD PLAYS IN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT. THE ATMOSPHERE FOR GROENEVELT'S EFFORT HAS BEEN ESPECIALLY SALUBRIOUS SINCE THE NVV ACTING PRESIDENT, 60-YEAR-OLD ADRI DE BOON IS READY TO RETIRE, AND NVV PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE WIM KOK IS 34-YEAR-OLD TRADE UNION APPARATCHIK WHO HAS REVEALED ALLEGED WEAKNESS (KOK COLLAPSED IN A SER SESSION EARLIER THIS YEAR. HIS DOCTORS ATTRIBUTED HIS COLLAPSE TO OVER-WORK AND TENSION. THIS RESULTED IN DOUBTS ABOUT HIS STAMINA, ESPECIALLY SINCE IT WAS SOON MONTHS BEFORE HE WAS ACTUALLY CONFIRMED AS PRESIDENT-DESIGNATE). THE UNFORTUNATE FALL-OUT FROM INTERNAL DISAGREEMENTS WITHIN THE NVV IS THAT KOK AND THE EXECUTIVE BOARD ARE NOW CONCENTRATING ON SOLVING THEIR INTERNAL PROBLEMS AND CONSOLIDATING THEIR WON POSITIONS. CONSEQUENTLY, THEY PUT TRADE UNION UNITY ON THE BACK BURNER. THIS CREATES PROBLEMS FOR THE NKV LEADERSHIP, WHICH HAS CONSISTENTLY CHAMPIONED SUCH UNITY AND ALSO FOR THE CNV LEADERSHIP, WHERE OPPOSITION TO TRADE UNION AMALGAMATION AMONG THE RANK AND FILE IS STRONGEST. END COMMENT. TANGUY

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